

In between budget negotiations and day-to-day emergencies, Acting Director Craig Stenning has continued to fulfill his promise to get out and meet with consumers, individuals, families, advocates and agencies associated with MHRH in his attempt to reconnect and to “listen and advocate.”

Acting Director Craig Stenning recently attended [Advocates in Action’s Leadership Graduation](#). The Leadership series is designed to provide individuals within the developmental disabilities community with the tools necessary to self-advocate and to speak on behalf of their field. Director Stenning noted that he has attended many graduations but that “this was one of the most emotional and joyous. This training obviously assists individuals in self- advocacy. Rather than always professing to have the answers, it is important for all of us working in the field to listen to the voice of the individual.”

Another emotional event was the [Mental Health Association Annual meeting](#). Rep. Patrick Kennedy received the Advocacy Award and spoke forcefully about the need for parity and the connection on mental health to physical health. Craig was able to speak privately with the Congressman about the progress of his Dad and also discuss issues related to mental health in RI.

Director Stenning also presented his views on the benefit of the “global waiver” to DD representatives at a general CPN/RI meeting, at the two public hearings held recently and with representatives of a new family organization.

Other visits over the past two weeks have been with representatives from South Shore Mental Health, Galilee Mission, the Kent Center, St. Joseph’s hospital, Perspectives, OSCR and the Trudeau Center. The range of issues involving MHRH also brought him to meet with the Mental Health Advocate, AT Wall and DOC officials as well as the Governor’s Workforce Cabinet.

As busy as it sounds, Craig has repeatedly stated that this is the best part of the job – “to go out and see the real work that benefits people.”